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NSC BRIEFING

20 May 1954

THE TACHENS

- I. On 15 and 16 May, an estimated 3,000 Chinese Communist troops were landed on three islands off the East China coast.
 - A. These forces occupied Kinmen, Toumenshan and Tienao, all previously unoccupied and all within 50 miles of the Nationalist-held Tachen Islands, northernmost stronghold of the Nationalist island chain.
 - B. Similar troop landings on small coastal islands have been made during spring and summer of years past, but moves this year are accompanied by unparalleled naval and air activity by both sides. In numerous naval clashes, losses have been inflicted on both sides (two Nationalist DE's have apparently been severely damaged) and MIG-15's have shot down a number of Nationalist conventional fighters.
 - C. Force which carried out recent landings included 20 ships -- frigates, gun boats and junks -- and four MIG-15's giving air cover.
- II. These moves may presage attack on Tachens, important Nationalist listening post and defensive outpost for early warning of Communist attacks.

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- 2 -

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A. [REDACTED] troop concentrations in coastal towns of Chekiang Province, establishment of a tactical army group headquarters and increased naval strength in the area. There are said to be a light cruiser, five destroyers (three of them Russian) and hundreds of smaller craft in the Tachen area.

B. Most of this information is as yet unconfirmed, and consensus of US intelligence is that recent moves are part of a continuing Communist war of nerves on Nationalist forces in the area, and may be aimed at testing Nationalist (as well as American reaction) to intensified campaigns on off-shore islands. No imminent threat to the Tachens is seen at this time.

C. Nationalist reaction to this is conflicting, according to various press reports. Some officials see no threat to the Tachens while Geneva conference continues; others believe assault will come momentarily. Latter view appears predominant.

III. Status of Nationalist defenses on Tachens

A. One of the best Nationalist divisions garrisons the islands. Strength of forces there is 15,000, including about 5,000 guerrillas.

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- 3 -

- B. State of readiness of these troops is considered excellent. However, they are believed vulnerable to air assault and amphibious attacks by night.
- C. Nationalist defense ministry is reportedly ordering naval and ground force reinforcements sent to the area.
- D. Further Communist occupation of islands between Formosa and the Tachens will make more difficult the problem of supply and support of Nationalist forces on the latter.
- E. It would take a concerted attack by three Communist divisions (30,000 troops) to take the Tachens, according to current estimates by G-2.

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